Exciting, engrossing, addicting, and impossible to put down, Suzanne Collins grasps the minds of young people through her award winning series, The Hunger Games. The story begins in the unidentified future, where evidently North America was destroyed, and from it born the nation of Panem, a nation with a rich government called the Capitol and it surrounding poor, 13 districts. After a rebellion against the capitol from district 13, the Capitol destroyed the citizens and land of district 13, from which they situated the Hunger Games, a competition in which two children from each district must fight to the death in an arena. Katniss Everdeen, a 16-year-old living in the poor, mining based district 12 has always, like all others in district 12, lived a hard life with poverty, lack of medical needs, and a major hunger issue. Though the Capitol does not know it, she and her friend Gale secretly leave the district to go out hunting illegally, and then sell their game in the hob, an illegal trade system. But it is time for the 74th Hunger Games and something extraordinary happens, her little sister Prim, age of 12, is selected.

This is the most unlikely thing imaginable to happen, seeing as 12-year-olds only have their name put in once to decide who goes into the Hunger Games, the odds were ever against her favour, but nevertheless she is chosen, so must compete. Katniss will not allow this to happen and so substitute’s for her little sister, an act rare yet allowed in the games. The male chosen to compete against her is Peeta, another 16-year-old who has only ever interacted with Katnis twice in his entire life. Together, along with their advisor, a drunken man named Haymitch (previous victor of the games), travel to the Capitol, all they know of which is that the area use to be called the Rockies, thousands of years ago. Upon arriving the pairs stylist, Cinna, creates Katniss the most extraordinary costume for the opening ceremonies giving her the title, “Katniss, the girl who was on fire,” this being almost literally!

The strategy plays out so that the two pretend to be epically in love, a smart way to get sponsors to send them food and other useful tools and devices. Katniss comes into the arena and faces unknown challenges, vast land and dangers the Capitol sends for them to defeat or to kill them. This, plus the pressure of knowing that this is all televised, makes Katniss decide to operate alone and without allies. Through her tough nature and outdoor abilities and skills, she kills little but lets the enemies kill out her other enemies, though she doesn’t get off easy, the Capitol makes life hard for everyone in the arena. She allies with the least likely person, a young 12-year-old tribute named Rue, who though is later on killed, is avenged seeing as Katniss stabs her murderer to death, and buries Rue and covers her grave with flowers.

Eventually, with a mere 8 tributes left, the gamekeeper announces that two tributes from the same district may win! Katniss finds Peeta injured in a cave and takes care of him, kisses him, and likewise “romances” him. This sends food down to them from various sponsors. More events and atrocities occur, until finally Katniss and Peeta end of on a platform called the Cornucopia, and they watch a fellow tribute and major enemy die bellow, after being viciously torn apart by mutant hounds.

The games are finally over after about a week. Katniss and her supposedly fake star-crossed lover, or at least so it seems, have won. But the gamekeeper announces that they “checked the rules,” and only one tribute may win, they had set them up. Both unwilling to kill the other, they put poisonous berries to their mouths, prepared to kill themselves as an act of possibly true love, and a defiance of the Capitol to have no victor, thus ruining the concept of the games. Yet the gamekeeper, according to a horrible President Snow, does something idiotic and announces that they can both win. Extremely happy, they return home safe and sound after the horrors of the games, and they and their district are shrouded with riches.

Yet the Capitol is dangerously mad at Katniss for suggesting the idea that they should kill themselves in the games, for it was an act of rebellion which would not be tolerated in the corrupt government. With the thought that they might “accidently” meet an early death, Katniss secretly prepares for a possible escape from Panem, or a chance to make things right, which will present itself in the second book in the series, Catching Fire. I too thoroughly enjoyed the second novel and absolutely cannot wait until the final book in the trilogy is released this August. What will happen to Katniss and Peeta, her family, the nation of Panem? Read the series to find out!

I relate this book to the subject of science through the actual Hunger Games itself. The main characters in the novel overcome elements of nature (though decided by humans), and must use common science skills to defeat them. For example, understanding weather patterns and how to get around them. As well as identifying different plant species and using them for purposes, such as food, shelter, a killing tool, we learned about uses of plant life in Plants for Food and Fibre as well!

In conclusion, I look forward to the final chapter in the trilogy, Mockingjay, and would encourage my peers and teachers to prepare themselves to read a thrilling novel! Warning: Once you open it, you make find yourself unable to close it!